

# **“The Mystery Of The Ages Revealed”**

## **Ephesians 3:1-21**

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**Teaching Aim:** To reveal the mystery of Christ and the manifold wisdom of God in bringing the Jews and Gentiles together into one new body; the church. To demonstrate how the theological concept of *“progressive revelation”* relates to the mystery of the church. To celebrate the incredible grace and love that God has poured on each of us who are in Christ Jesus.

### **DIGGING DEEPER INTO GOD’S WORD (BIBLE STUDY)**

#### **Part I: The mystery of the Jews and Gentiles coming together in one body; the Church (Eph. 3:1-7)**

1. Paul was under house arrest as he wrote the Book of Ephesians from Rome (**vs. 1**). (**See Acts 28:16,30**) What was the cause of Paul’s initial imprisonment? (**See Acts 22:19-22**). Have you ever had to stand up and take an unpopular position when it comes to the doctrine of God? How did taking this stand affect your relationship with others?
  
2. What is the meaning of the word *“dispensation?”* (See Dictionary) What did Paul mean when he wrote of, *“the dispensation of the grace of God”* (**vs. 2**)? What was Paul’s role in the administration of this grace? (**See Gal. 1:16; 2:7-8**)
  
3. What is the definition of the word *“mystery”* (**vs. 3**)? (See Dictionary) What mystery had not been made known in other ages (**vv. 3-5**)? (**See vs. 6**) What are some of the other mysteries revealed in the New Testament? (See **Cor. 15:51-54; Col. 1:27; 1 Tim. 3:16**)
  
4. How do the words, *“revelation, inspiration, and illumination”* relate to the transmission and understanding of the Biblical text?

5. What startling revelation is made in **verse 6**? Why would this revelation anger the Jews so much? How did the Jews react when Paul and Trophimus the Ephesian were seen together in Jerusalem? (See **Acts 21:26-36**) What assumption did they make? Did Paul take Trophimus into the temple complex or were they just in the vicinity? How did the Jews use this false accusation against Paul? Why is it never a good thing to assume?
  
6. According to **verses 6b-7**, what was Paul appointed a minister of? Why do you think Paul considered this a gift from God? (See **Acts 8:1-3; 26:9-11**) What was Paul's power source in ministry? Where should we find our power in ministry today?

## **Part II: The heavenly purpose of the mystery of God (Eph. 3:8-13)**

1. Why did Paul consider himself "*less than the least of all the saints*" (**vs. 8**)? (See **Acts 7:54-8:3; 1 Tim. 1:15**) For what purpose was this grace given to Paul? Peter was considered to be the Apostle to the Jews. Who was Paul the Apostle to? (See **Rom. 11:13**) What message did Paul bring to the Gentiles?
  
2. The word "*fellowship*" in **verse 9** is translated as "*stewardship*" or "*dispensation*" in other Bible translations. What do the words "*stewardship*" and "*dispensation*" mean? (See Dictionary) How do these words relate to the mystery Paul is revealing in **chapter 3**?
  
3. What is meant by the theological term "*progressive revelation*" (**vs. 9**)? How do **Gen. 12:1-3; Isa. 49:6; Eph. 3:4-6** demonstrate this concept?

4. What is the meaning of the word “*manifold*?” (See Dictionary) What is “*the manifold wisdom of God*” as referred to in **verse 10**? (Hint: See **vs. 6**) What group of created beings is Paul referring to when he speaks of, “*the principalities and powers in the heavenly places*?” According to **verse 10**, are angels watching the church? (See **1 Cor. 11:7-10**) What is God teaching the angels through the church?
  
5. What eternal purpose did God accomplish in Jesus Christ (**vs. 11**)? (See **Eph. 2:13-17**) John MacArthur says, “*The supreme purpose of the church is to glorify God, which includes the displaying of His wisdom (v. 10) before the angels, who then honor Him with even greater praise.*” According to the Westminster Shorter Catechism, “*What is the chief end of man?*” (Hint: Google it) What are you doing in your life to bring glory to God?
  
6. What privilege do New Testament believers have “*in Christ*” that Old Testament saints did not (**vs. 12**)? (See **Heb. 4:14-16**) On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your prayer life? Why? Are you taking advantage of your special access to God by regularly praying? If not, why not? What are some practical steps you can take to improve your prayer life?
  
7. Have you ever suffered because of your faith in Christ (**vs. 13**)? If so, how? What was the reason behind your suffering? From a spiritual perspective, how was God glorified through your suffering and what did you learn from the experience?
  
8. According to **verse 13**, who was suffering for the sake of the Christians in Ephesus? Why was Paul under house arrest in Rome at the time of this writing? (See **Acts 22:19-22**) In what way did Paul’s tribulation bring glory to the Ephesian church? Have you found in your own life that you’ve gained strength and grown closer to the Lord through suffering? (See **Jam. 1:2-4**) Do you have the habit of praising God, even in the difficult times?

### **Part III: The revelation of God's grand mystery drives Paul to worship (Eph. 3:14-21)**

1. In what posture do you feel the closest to God when you worship (**vs. 14**)? Why? What are some of the postures we find demonstrated in Scripture? (**See Eph. 3:14; 1 Kin. 8:22; 1 Chron. 17:16; Psa. 134:2; Matt. 26:39**)
2. Who is Paul referring to when he says, "*the whole family in heaven and earth*" (**vs. 15**)? In what way are we named after "*the Father*?" According to **verse 16**, what is the first petition that Paul requests? What are some ways that the Holy Spirit strengthens our inner man today? (**See Rom. 5:5; 15:13; 1 Thess. 1:5; Heb. 2:4**) How has the Holy Spirit strengthened you in the past?
3. What is needed for a mighty redwood tree to grow taller and stronger? (Note: These trees can be almost 400 feet tall and live 2,200 years.) Why is the redwood tree such a great illustration of what the Christian life should be? Are you enduring and becoming stronger with age? Are you reaching to heaven for the water of life? Why is it so important for every Christian to be "*rooted and grounded in love*" (**vs. 17**)? How have the storms of life strengthened you over time?
4. According to **verses 18 and 19**, what was Paul praying all Christians would come to the realization of? How do **verses 18 and 19** relate to the sanctification process? People become physically weaker with age. What should happen to Christians as they age spiritually? Do you see this happening in your life? If so, how?
5. What does being "*filled with all the fullness of God*" mean (**vs. 19**)? What can we learn about the fullness of Jesus from **Col. 2:9-10** and **Heb. 1:1-3**? Paul reveals that this fullness is available to us through the power of the Holy Spirit. (See **Phil 3:7-11**) What are some ways that we can draw on this power today? (**See Rom. 8:26,27; Gal. 5:22-25; Eph. 5:18-21**)

6. Paul closes this first section of the Book of Ephesians (**Chapters 1-3**) with a beautiful doxology. What is a “*doxology*?” (See Dictionary) Why is it appropriate for Paul to finish the first half of the book this way before he moves into practical application? According to Paul, what can we expect God to do in our lives if we move forward simply trusting Him (**vs. 20**)? Have you experienced this in your life? Who should get the glory when good things happen (**vs. 21**)?
  
7. **Verses 20 & 21** are excellent verses for every Christian to memorize. How can these verses be used to encourage and help you during the difficult times of life?

### **MINER’S CORNER ~ *Manna to live by!***

1. The mystery Paul reveals is that Jews and Gentiles alike will be fellow heirs of the church and partakers of God’s promises in Christ through the gospel.
2. The manifold wisdom of God is being revealed to the angels through the church.
3. In Christ, we are encouraged to come boldly before the throne of God in prayer.
4. Suffering for Christ is not a bad thing when people are brought to faith in Jesus because of it and others are strengthened in their spiritual walk.
5. The Christian should be like a mighty redwood tree: well-watered, rooted and grounded in love, strengthened by the storms of life, and continuously reaching toward heaven.
6. In the trials of life we should remember that God “*is able to do immeasurably more than all that we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us; to Him be glory!*” (See **Eph. 3:20-21**)